

**Whatcom County  
Council Climate Action and Natural Resources Committee**

**COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
311 Grand Avenue, Ste #105  
Bellingham, WA 98225-4038  
(360) 778-5010**



**Committee Minutes - Final**

**Tuesday, February 6, 2024  
11:10 AM  
Hybrid Meeting**

**HYBRID MEETING - ADJOURNS BY 12:10 P.M. (PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON, SEE  
REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT [www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil](http://www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil), OR  
CALL 360.778.5010)**

**COUNCILMEMBERS**

Todd Donovan  
Kaylee Galloway  
Mark Stremler

**CLERK OF THE COUNCIL**

Dana Brown-Davis, C.M.C.

## **Call To Order**

Committee Chair Kaylee Galloway called the meeting to order at 11:11 a.m. in a hybrid meeting.

## **Roll Call**

**Present:** 3 - Todd Donovan, Kaylee Galloway, and Mark Stremler

Also Present: Barry Buchanan, Tyler Byrd, Ben Elenbaas, and Jon Scanlon

## **Announcements**

## **Committee Discussion**

1. [AB2024-105](#) Discussion of Phase 2 of the Whatcom Climate Vulnerability Assessment and Shoreline Management Solutions Project  
  
Chris Elder, Public Works Department, read from a presentation (on file) about the science and projections of the study, the completion of Phase I of the vulnerability assessment, the tasks of Phase II beginning in March, examples of adaptation strategies and climate-related tasks as part of Phase II for the Comprehensive Plan Update, and development regulation code updates after the Comprehensive Plan is adopted. He answered questions about the hundred-year flood predictions and how adaptation strategies, such as shoreline protection devices, would need to be permitted.  
  
Royce Buckingham, Prosecuting Attorney's Office, answered what the status is on negotiations between property management and the Tribes regarding dredging in Sandy Point, and stated the dredging project has been mired in legal concerns for a while. The Lummi Nation is working with the homeowners out there to come to a compromise.  
  
Elder answered whether there is a way they can look at an overlay of the vulnerability assessment story maps to see what the underlying zoning is in those areas and whether those maps are available for download. He answered how often king tide events occur and whether the coastal hazard mapping summary on page 12 of the presentation is saying that a hundred-year flood will happen every year. He stated that the study showed a ten percent likelihood that we would hit that three-foot seal level rise mark annually (roughly) by year 2100, which would essentially equate to today's hundred-year flood.  
  
He answered what the public's take on this study has been and stated in the three public meetings since the start of Phase I, there has been some

frustration with the current code or County response to recent floods so it is hard for people to wrap their heads around long-term issues.

He answered whether the Birch Bay Berm project will be able to handle what is potentially coming, and stated it has helped some but is not designed to handle the magnitude of what they are talking about today.

He answered what they would need to be able to do more of this type of thing so that Council can incorporate potential changes into the Comprehensive Plan, whether Phase II will include the three branches of the Nooksack River upstream of Deming, and whether we should look at any other waterfront areas in the future. He stated the areas upstream of Deming are not currently on their to-do list, but for Phase II they are going to cover a hundred percent of the county's coastal shoreline. He answered whether actually getting something physically done to address the issues after Phase II will require another study, and stated they are planning on developing an adaptation plan for one pilot community and are trying to identify broad strategies that could apply coast-wide. They will also draft some recommended actions for the shoreline, zoning, or other land-use codes. He answered whether he needs anything from Council to get those code amendments docketed, how the County could work with the cities to develop their own hazard mitigation or adaptation plans, what the cities' involvement has been, and whether we could leverage any funding to help the cities in their planning efforts.

He answered who he sees as the models (domestically or internationally) for doing a really good job of thinking ahead and putting together policies and programs on this front, and stated Whatcom County is one of the most cutting-edge counties in the state trying to incorporate sea level rise vulnerability, but California is a few years ahead of us in trying to model out what sea level rise and storm surge impacts are. He answered whether we could ask the State then for reimbursement.

He answered questions about the historical accuracy of similar sea level prediction models and whether our models have ranges in their predictions to account for the uncertainty around some of the contributing factors.

**This agenda item was DISCUSSED.**

### **Items Added by Revision**

There were no agenda items added by revision.

### **Other Business**

There was no other business.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 11:59 a.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL  
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

**Kaylee Galloway-via email 2/8/2024**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

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Kaylee Galloway, Committee Chair

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Kristi Felbinger, Minutes Transcription

SIGNED COPY ON FILE